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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 002014

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KABILA'S TRIUMPHAL VISIT TO KISANGANI

Classified By: Poloff Meghan Moore for Reasons 1.4 B and D

1. (C) Summary: Thousands of residents warmly greeted President Kabila during his long-anticipated first visit to formerly-rebel-held territory since becoming President in 2001. His October 16-18 trip to Kisangani was widely seen as a tangible sign of the country's reunification and the kick-off for next year's presidential campaign. Although the president's guards treated former RCD/G soldiers and policeman poorly, and the Presidency refused to accredit local journalists, the trip, on the whole, was positive. End Summary.

Kabila Well-Received

2.(C) While in Kisangani, the President made a number of speeches, met with business, civil service and religious leaders, attended a special church service, and laid foundation stones for a medical clinic and the central market. Attending the presidential events were a number of ambassadors (including the French Ambassador), foreign and Kinshasa-based press (local journalists could not get accredited), and members of the PPRD. Thanking Kisangani residents for resisting occupation during the war, he said his visit was a strong sign of reunification, that peace and reconciliation have become realities, and elections must take place. During his visit, he surprised his guards and others by walking through the central market without a flak jacket, according to Kinshasa-based press. A local human rights leader told poloff that Kabila, who stayed in a tent in the neighborhood most affected during the war, presented himself as a man of the people and was very well-received by the local population. He said many saw Kabila's visit as a launch of his presidential campaign, complete with campaign speeches, PPRD operatives who arrived early with envelopes full of cash to mobilize people, and the payment of certain civil servants after Kabila left.

Mistrust Continues

3.(C) Hundreds of heavily-armed presidential guards (GSSP) were on hand to provide security for the President. During the week prior to his arrival, they sent former RCD/G soldiers as far away as Lubutu (about 150km), disarmed local policeman who were cantoned outside city limits, searched residences of the governor, vice governors, and ex-RCD/G brigade commanders and deputy military regional commanders (whose bodyguards were taken away). A local human rights leader said that the GSSP blocked roads, cordoned off neighborhoods, and arrested a number of people. On October 25, RCD/G Parliamentary Group Leader Moise Nyragabo complained to Ambassador and poloff that ex-RCD/G soldiers, including the deputy military regional commander and brigade commanders, were kicked out of Kisangani prior to the President's visit. Soldiers loyal to 9th Military Regional Commander General Padiri were allowed to stay. USAID staff and a local human rights leader said they fear the GSSP's treatment of ex-RCD/G soldiers, and the GSSP's complete military control of the city could exacerbate existing tensions.

Comment

4.(C) Kabila's first visit to former rebel-held territory was widely seen as a success. The presidential pre-campaign has clearly started, with political opposition VP Z'Ahidi Ngoma visiting Bukavu during the same weekend (which reportedly annoyed Kabila), and MLC VP Bemba visiting Bukavu immediately after. Kabila's warm reception in Kisangani may encourage him to visit other eastern districts and towns, including Ituri and Kindu. Although the GSSP treated former RCD/G soldiers and policeman poorly, and the Presidency refused to accredit local journalists, the trip, especially in terms of electoral politics, was very positive for Kabila.

MEECE